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MODERN THEOLOGY AND THE PREACHING OF THE GOSPEL

VI. THE CHURCH: ITS PRESENT OPPORTUNITY AND DUTY

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In the last article we considered the contribution of modern theology to our understanding of Christ's deity. We saw that this doctrine has social as well as individual significance. In Jesus, God has shown us not only what he himself is like, but the type of character which he desires to see realized in every one of us. Here is a faith which is at the same time an ideal and a challenge. How is this challenge to be met?

This brings me to the final topic in the present series—the church, its opportunity and its duty. It is the point at which we have been aiming all along. Let me recall the ground we have traversed.

We began by considering what theology can do for the preacher, and we saw that it can do two things: it can give him a general point of view and it can help him in the particular problems with which he has to deal.

I called attention, in the first place, to certain general conclusions of modern theology which are helpful to the preacher. We saw that religion is a fundamental fact in human life with which every man must reckon whether he will or no. We saw, further, that religions differ in kind and that difference in kind means difference in value. We saw

that if there is to be a universal religion it must be Christianity, since Christianity alone is able to satisfy the permanent religious needs of mankind. We saw, finally, that Christ is central in Christianity. He is its distinctive contribution to the life of mankind and the standard by which all religious progress must be tested.

We went on to apply these general conclusions to the chief problems of practical religion—the problem of the source of faith, the problem of the object of faith, and the problem of the effect of faith upon daily living. We asked what modern theology has to tell us about the Bible, about God, and about salvation, and we saw that it is its effort to interpret each of these central facts of the religious life in the light of the distinctive conviction of historic Christianity, the deity of Jesus Christ. It remains to ask how the results which we have reached are to be made effective. How are we to bring the convictions we have gained to bear practically upon human life?

We must do it by organization. Every great cause which has commanded the allegiance of men has embodied itself in institutions. We, too, must have some means of social propaganda by

which we can touch men all along the line and win them to our cause. Such a means is the Christian church. The church is the religious society which has come into existence for the very purpose of interpreting Christ's spirit and perpetuating his work. To the church is committed that practical demonstration of his deity which consists in the victory of his principles in the world.

What, then, do we mean by the church of Christ and what exactly is its function in society?

It is high time that we asked ourselves this question. One must be blind to the signs of the times not to recognize that there are important sections of the population upon which the hold of the church has weakened. I do not mean by this to imply that the church is on the down grade or that its influence is decreasing. We are often told this, but I do not believe that it is true. On the contrary, I am confident that the church is improving and that its efficiency is growing. I do not believe there has ever been a time in human history when, taken in the large, the influence of the church was more wholesome and more beneficent. But this is quite consistent with the fact that its progress is not as rapid as we should like or its influence as extensive. There are many excellent people who hold aloof from the church. It is not that they are irreligious or lack ideals, but that their moral and spiritual life has found other outlets. They are interested in settlement or in civic work, or in organized philanthropy in some one of its many forms. For their preaching they go to the poets or the philosophers. They do not seem to feel their need of the church or to realize

their obligation to it. And yet they are people on whose sympathy and support we ought to be able to count.

When we trace this alienation to its roots we shall find that it is due, not simply to dissatisfaction with the practical work of the church, but to the lack of a clear understanding of its function in society—in other words, to the lack of a definite ideal.

This is especially true of those who have been brought up under Protestant influences. Standing as we do in a peculiar sense for religious freedom, we have been from the first suspicious of organized Christianity. The church as an institution is not made so prominent with us as with some other bodies of Christians, and it is not strange, therefore, that many of our members should be at sea as to its real function.

But such an attitude is very short-sighted. Institutional Christianity is not a fact from which we can escape even if we wished to do so. It meets us on every side and enters into our most familiar experiences. From childhood to old age the church is our constant companion. It teaches our children; it marries and buries us; it provides the forms through which our spiritual aspiration finds natural expression. If its influence is evil it is an evil of colossal proportions. If its effects are negligible it represents a waste of energy so stupendous as to be appalling. If it is an instrument of good it is one so far-reaching that it is folly not to use it to the full. All the more if we are Protestants believing in freedom of opinion and individual responsibility do we need to have clear-cut views as to the nature and function of the church.

Fundamental to clear thinking is the distinction between the church as a religious society and the church as an ecclesiastical institution. The former is the company of Christian people. It includes all who have been touched by the Spirit of Christ and live to promote his cause in the world. The latter is the organization which has grown up in the course of history, with its complex machinery of creed and ritual, order and discipline. The New Testament commonly uses the word church in the first of these senses. We today commonly use it in the second. Failure to distinguish between these two uses is responsible for not a little of the existing confusion.

There are two points as to which current thought about the church needs to be clarified. The first has to do with the relation of the church as a company of believers to the church as an ecclesiastical organization; the second has to do with the function of the organization.

All bodies of Christians agree that there is a difference between the ecclesiastical institution we call the church and the company of persons whose spiritual life it is designed to express and to promote. They are divided in their estimate of the relative importance of the two. According to one view the continuity of the church's life depends primarily upon the institution. It is the church as an institution which God has appointed to be the vicar of Christ and to which he has intrusted the deposit of truth and grace which he has provided for the guidance and salvation of mankind. According to the other view the continuity of the church's life depends primarily upon the persons who compose

it. The true apostolic succession is the succession of consecrated lives, and the institution we call the church is an instrument which the Christian people have created under the guidance of God's Spirit to assist them in their work of propaganda and of ministry.

It is true that the implications of the two principles are not always consistently drawn. While the first represents what we commonly call the Catholic and the second the Protestant view of the church, the contrast is by no means confined to the members of the ecclesiastical bodies which bear these names. There are Catholics, like the Modernists, whose view of the church approximates that of Protestantism. There are Protestants who in their conception of the church are essentially Catholic, and there are many, both Catholic and Protestant, who have never thought the question through at all. Life does not develop along lines of logic, and the history of churches, as of individuals, is the story of compromise, sometimes deliberate, more often unconscious.

Nevertheless, the contrast persists and with the growth of knowledge is bound to come to clearer and clearer consciousness. Whatever may be our practical attitude in view of the particular ecclesiastical situation, in ideal we must be Catholic or Protestant, and the choice of ideal will, in the long run, determine our practical activity. It is important, therefore, that we who call ourselves Protestants should realize clearly just what the choice involves.

First, then, let me say that it does not involve the perpetuation of the sectarian spirit which in the past has often been associated with the name. One

may freely admit that in the particular questions which have been in debate between Catholics and Protestants the right has not always been on the same side. One may recognize that Catholicism, with its reverence for authority and its strong sense of social solidarity, has emphasized a side of religion over which Protestants have been tempted to pass too lightly. Christianity is larger than any one of its existing forms, and we may be sure that the religion of the future, if it is to be truly Christian, will make place for all the truth for which Catholicism stands and provide for all the needs which now find their satisfaction in institutional Christianity.

But of this, too, we may be sure, that if the Christianity of the future is to be truly Christian it will apply to its conception of the church the same principles which determine its thought of God and of salvation. It will not tolerate any substitute for that free intercourse between the Father and his child which is the normal relationship between those who are spiritually akin. It will accept with thankfulness all the heritage which has come down to us from the past, of creed and sacrament and ritual and institution, but it will use these as means and not as end. It will never forget that the true church of Christ is the whole company of Christian people in all the manifold forms of their activity, and that what we call the church today is only one form, although a most important form, of this many-sided activity.

And this brings me to the second of our two questions—that which has to do with the specific function of the church as an institution. Here, too, we find two views. According to the first of

these the church is the all-embracing Christian institution, the agency through which the Christian people ought to express their Christianity all along the line. According to the second, it is one among other agencies which they use for this purpose. It is the Christian people organized for religion, that is to say, for worship, for religious instruction, and for inspiration.

I believe that the second view is the truer. The church as an institution is a specialized form of Christian activity. It exists to remind men of God and to help them to realize his presence as the supreme reality.

At first sight it might seem as if this were to assign the church a very narrow function. But when we remember what kind of being God is we see our mistake. The God we worship is the Lord of the whole earth. He is not our Father only, but the Father of all men. His social purpose embraces every human being, and he has taught us through Christ that the worship he requires is service.

It does not follow, however, that this service must find its sole expression through a single channel. Society includes many different institutions—the home, the school, the workshop, and the state. These, too, as well as the church, may become organs of Christ, agencies through which his Spirit may find expression. It is a good thing to open a day nursery for neglected children, but a better thing to make such homes that children will not be neglected. It is a good thing to open a hospital for tubercular patients, but a better thing to have such a healthful city that we shall have no tuberculosis. Our business as Christians is to Christianize society as a whole.

When all our institutions, I repeat, do their work so well that the church does not need to supplement them, then, and not till then, shall we have succeeded in our aim.

This does not mean that the church should never do anything but preach religion. As a matter of fact, it does much more. It has social functions. It is the gathering-place of the community, the one spot in which men of all ranks and social position meet together on an equality. It has philanthropic functions: it dispenses charity to those who are in need, visits the sick, feeds the hungry, ministers to the prisoners. It has ethical functions: it stands for righteousness in the community, and through its clubs and organizations often takes an active part in movements for civic betterment and reform. There are, indeed, some communities in which the church is the one comprehensive institution about which center all the activities of the Christian people. What is sometimes called the institutional church is concerned with education and with amusement, with political activity and with economic betterment, as well as with religion. It has its libraries and and its clubrooms, its mothers' meetings and its kindergartens, its gymnasiums and its employment bureaus, and so on through all the manifold list of interests which have been developed by our complex social life. It is entirely natural and proper that this should be so. It is always wasteful to duplicate machinery, and when there is no other organization in existence of which it is possible to make use, it is legitimate and, indeed, necessary for the Christian church to step in and do the work that needs to be done.

But we are talking of ideals and here there is need of clear thinking if we are not to go astray. Our contention is that however useful and necessary other functions of the church may be, they are incidental to its true work, which is religion. The primary object of the church, we maintain, is to keep alive in the world the consciousness of God as the supreme fact of human life. If we fail here no lesser success will atone for our failure.

Are we, then, to suppose that when the kingdom of God comes there will be no more need of the church? Let me answer this question by another. Are we to suppose that when the kingdom of God comes we shall no longer realize our relation to God as the supreme fact of human life, that we shall no longer desire to express our communion with him in prayer and praise, that we shall no longer wish to tell others what he means to us and to hear what he means to them, that we shall no longer turn to him for inspiration for service and guidance in duty? So long as we do these things we may be sure that we shall still have a church, for it is to meet these needs that the church exists.

When, therefore, I propose for consideration "The Opportunity and Duty of the Church," I use the word church in the familiar sense in which we all use it. I am thinking of the institution of which we are members, the institution of which the historic churches are part, the Christian people organized for religion. And we wish to know of this church two things: first, What is its opportunity? and, second, What is its duty?

I can answer this double question in as many sentences. The opportunity of

the church is to become the leader to which all earnest men will turn for guidance and inspiration in the moral and spiritual revival which is going on all about us. The duty of the church—and that means of all of us who belong to it—is to use this opportunity to the full.

Let me explain more fully what I mean. And first of the opportunity.

I say the opportunity of the church is to become the leader to which all earnest men will turn for guidance and inspiration in the moral and spiritual revival which is in progress all about us.

I assume that there is such a moral and spiritual revival. I will not stop to prove this. In the new standard of business morality, in the new ideals of civic responsibility, in the growing humanitarianism which shows itself in the movement for social betterment in all its manifold forms, we are aware of a new spirit which we cannot ignore. Even those who are not in sympathy with it are influenced by it. Men find they cannot do with impunity what they used to do without question a dozen years ago.

Now, the notable fact about this great moral revival is that it has been to a very considerable extent independent of the church as an organization. Individual ministers here and there have taken part in it. Individual church members have made notable contributions to it. But the church as a whole, the church as an organized body, has too often held aloof from it. It has not been the acknowledged leader to which those who are interested in social reform have turned.

I do not believe that this is as it should be. I believe that the leaders of

the church ought to be leaders in every movement for moral and social uplift and that they are qualified to become such, and I wish now to give the reasons for my faith. They are three:

In the first place, the church has access to the largest number of people who are open to spiritual influence. In the second place, it has command of the ultimate spiritual motive. And, in the third place, it is of all institutions the most free from conflicting interests.

In the first place, the church has a responsibility for leadership in this movement because it has access to the largest number of people who are open to spiritual influence.

I am anxious here not to be misunderstood. I am far from assuming that the church has any monopoly of virtue or unselfishness. One must be blind, indeed, not to recognize how large a contribution is being made to social progress today by men and women who are outside the church. But what I mean is this, that if we take things in the large it will be found that the Christian church includes in its membership a greater number of men and women who feel their moral responsibility for others' welfare and who are open to spiritual appeal than any other single organization, or, indeed, than all other organizations together. If you do not believe this, read such a paper as the *Survey*, the organ of the charitable interests of this country, and see how large a place the religious motive plays in the lives of the men and women who write for it. Study the list of contributors to any of the great societies that have to do with organized charity; go out yourself and try to raise money for any good cause

and see how much you can get from men and women who have no connection with the church, and you will realize that, however imperfect Christians may be and however far they fall below the standard which their religion sets, they are still more open to the appeal of social need and social responsibility than any other equally large group of people. Here is a great force waiting to be utilized for good, and it is our business as Christian ministers to see that this is done.

But, in the second place, the church ought to assume leadership because it has command of the ultimate spiritual motive. That motive is God's love for man and the corresponding love of man for man which it calls forth.

We stand today, with reference to this matter of moral and social reform, in a very different position from the generations who have preceded us. We know (or at least we are in a fair way to know if we will) what we ought to do to establish the kingdom of God on earth.

I have spoken in earlier articles of the contribution which modern science has made to the study of theology, but the contribution of science to philanthropy is even more notable. We have been studying these social evils which are all about us, and we have found that many of them are not irremediable. Take, for example, such a matter as tuberculosis, which is so prominently before the public today. We know that this is a preventable disease. If we do what we ought we can stamp it out as completely as we have stamped out cholera and smallpox. Take the matter of prison reform. Take the matter of juvenile delinquency. Take even the

great question of poverty itself. Vast as these problems are, stupendous as is the impression which they make upon the imagination, we know that they are not insoluble. If each one of us would do what he ought to do, we could transform society and bring in the kingdom of God.

But the trouble is that so many people do not want to do it. We see what ought to be done, but we are not willing to make the sacrifice. Often it does not seem to us worth while. At a recent meeting of the National Conference of Charities¹ the president, Homer Foulkes, passed in review the progress for the last few years in social and charitable reform. He pointed out how slow this progress had been and how often the bright hopes with which a new movement had been begun had suffered shipwreck, and he traced the cause of this failure back to the place where all the most serious failures of life belong—to the lack of adequate motive. Men were not willing to exert themselves or to make the sacrifice that was required.

Here is the great opportunity of the Christian church, for in the gospel of the God of love we command the supreme motive and can supply the power which science alone can never furnish. When I realize that the poor fellow who is dying of consumption in the back room of some dark tenement is my brother, that the young girl who has gone on the street to earn her living because some man deceived her is my sister; when we all realize our spiritual relationship to the men and women who are the victims of social injustice and economic wrong, we shall set about righting their wrongs

¹ Cf. *Survey*, Vol. xxvi, p. 526-31.

with a vigor and enthusiasm which in the long run will be bound to tell. Who is to do it if we do not? Who is in so good a position to do it if they would?

And this brings me to the third of the three advantages which fit the church for leadership. I mean its freedom from conflicting interests. There is no institution which is so well fitted as the Christian church to take the lead in the betterment of society, because there is no other institution which exists exclusively for the promotion of Christ-likeness.

Here again I am anxious not to be misunderstood. I realize as well as anyone the imperfection of the church. Organization in any form has its difficulties and its dangers. The mere work of running the machine absorbs so much of our energy that the strength and time that ought to go to higher and more important things are wasted. That which was meant to be a means tends to become an end, and before we know it the institution which should be our servant has become our master.

But while this is true of the church, as of every other institution, it is less true of the church than of other institutions, for the simple reason that by its very constitution the church is brought continually face to face with the moral and spiritual ideals of Jesus Christ. Other institutions may make splendid contributions to the upbuilding of the kingdom of God, and, thank God, they are making them. But, after all, they are incidental to the main purpose for which they exist. The newspaper must make money for its stockholders, and the editor is only in part free. The teacher has the whole field of human knowledge

to cultivate, and what he has to contribute of moral and spiritual inspiration is by the way. But the Christian minister exists for the single purpose of making real to men the purpose of God for the salvation of the world. There is no other task which is laid upon him and no other obligation to which he is committed than this, and if he fail here his failure is of all failures the most inexcusable.

This brings me to my second and last proposition, that it is the duty of the church—and that means of us who are its members—to use this great opportunity to the full.

You will notice that I have put this statement in a personal form. When we are talking of opportunity we can speak in the abstract, but duty is always an individual matter. It comes home to the conscience of some specific man or woman. The duty of the church means your duty and mine.

Let us analyze this duty more in detail and see what it is like. As I see it, it has two phases. It is, in the first place, a duty of vision, and, in the second place, a duty of action. There is something for us to see and something for us to do.

First of all, there is something for us to see. I put this first because it is most important. Our first business as ministers is to have an ideal. If we do not know what we want to do, it will be hopeless for us to try to do it.

When I was coming over the Canadian Pacific last year I passed through the wonderful horseshoe tunnels just beyond Mount Stephen. The railroad turns into the mountain and there curves completely around, descending all the time

until it emerges far below the place where it entered. Crossing the valley to the other side, it repeats the same operation and thus transforms a grade which had been so heavy that it required four engines to move a train in safety into one which is practicable with a single engine.

These tunnels are one of the great engineering feats of the continent, and I was interested to know how they were built. It seems that the engineer had planned his route so carefully that two sets of workmen beginning at opposite ends of the tunnel had met in the center scarcely an inch apart. "And the interesting thing about it," said my informant, "is the fact that the engineer made the plans of the tunnel while he was still on the plains."

But who set the engineer to work? Who took him from his office in the city and brought him to the mountains and said: "Here is your problem; solve it"? That was a man of a different type—the idealist who first saw Vancouver and Montreal as parts of a single railway system and refused to believe in the existence of any obstacle strong enough to keep them permanently apart.

In our work of social reconstruction we need engineers to plan in detail the lines along which the train of progress is to move. And it is impossible to value their work too highly. But engineers alone, however complete their mastery of social mechanics, will never bring in the kingdom of God. There must be someone first to see where the train needs to go and to inspire others with his faith that the desired goal can be reached. That is the office of the minister of religion. He may not know in detail how

the obstacles are to be overcome that keep us from the promised land, but he must know where the land lies and what it has to offer. He is the prospector who points the way for those who are to follow, and his first duty is to see straight.

But it is not enough to see. We must act upon what we see. And this brings me to the second of our duties as ministers, which is application. As Christians we are responsible for making the church the most effective instrument possible for accomplishing the great work which is given it to do. There is material here for a book in itself. Let me, in closing, simply touch on two or three points which lie on the surface.

We saw that the church as a religious institution exists for three purposes: worship, religious instruction, and inspiration. How far is it realizing its ideal in this threefold respect?

Take worship. If what we have been saying is true, this is the supreme function of the Christian church. The church exists to make God real to the consciousness of man. And when I say God I mean the Christian God, the Father of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. If Christianity is true, then God is not only the most real but the most glorious and significant of facts, and the purpose of our gathering in church Sunday by Sunday is that we may realize afresh the infinite resources of inspiration and strength which this great fact puts at our command and go out solemnized, comforted, but above all, consecrated to the work to which we were called through Christ.

But if this is our purpose in going to church, everything that we do in church ought to contribute to this purpose.

From the opening prelude to the benediction, every word that is spoken and every note that is sung ought to play its part in deepening our consciousness of God. Nothing ought to be permitted in the service that is merely formal or conventional, nothing that is shallow or insincere, nothing that is a hindrance rather than a help to faith.

And yet, how hard it is to realize this ideal in practice! How much that we do in church is haphazard and unrelated! How easy it is for the minister to concentrate his attention upon the sermon and let the earlier parts of the service degenerate into a mere routine! How easy to be content with the forms that have come down to us from the past in hymn and liturgy and prayer without making our own the living faith of which they were the expression and which must vitalize every new use we make of them if they are really to result in a more vivid consciousness of God! Above all, how few of us feel our responsibility for the creation of those new forms of worship which shall express in dignified and fitting language the discovery of God's power and activity in the social movements of our time which is so characteristic a feature of present-day Christianity! More than by its sermons, an age is known by its hymns and by its prayers. It is an encouraging sign of the times that the new forms are beginning to appear. May we not hope that such prayers as Professor Rauschenbusch's "Prayers of the Social Awakening,"¹ and such hymns as have recently been gathered by Mrs. Mussey in the *Survey*,² are prophetic of many more to follow—prayers and hymns no less con-

scious of God's presence and glory than the greatest of the hymns of the past, but differing from them in the fact that they find God at work here and now and revive the old prophetic hope, too long forgotten, of a day when God's will shall be done on earth?

Or take the second of the three functions I have referred to—religious teaching. How far is the church realizing the ideal here? Protestantism, as we all know, has always emphasized the teaching function of the minister. It stands for a faith that is intelligent and robust and believes that such faith is the birthright of every Christian believer.

Yet, as one who has been for many years a teacher, dealing with young men coming from all over the country, nothing has impressed me more than the lack of thorough grounding in the essentials of Christianity. Men come to the seminary who have been brought up in Christian homes, who have studied in Christian colleges, who have been members of the Christian church all their lives, and yet who know little of the Bible, who are ignorant of the history of Christianity and of the government of the church, and, above all, who know nothing of theology.

There are many reasons for this. In part it is due to the change in our habits of life which has altered the relation between home and church and school. In part it is the result of the change in educational method which has substituted freedom of choice for the older disciplinary curriculum. Above all, it is due to the change in the angle of vision to which reference was made in the opening chapter, the loss of the old view-

¹ Pilgrim Press, Chicago, 1909.

² Jan. 3, 1914.

point before the new has come to take its place. But, whatever the cause, the fact remains that there are multitudes of people in our churches who cannot give an intelligent reason for their faith—indeed, who have never given serious thought to the ultimate questions with which faith is concerned.

Here is our opportunity as Christian ministers. It is with the ultimate realities that we have to do. It is our business to teach men what they most need to know about God and the soul, sin and salvation, duty and destiny—the great questions which sleep in the soul of man until some crisis calls them to the light.

But to do this effectively we must do it deliberately and intelligently. We cannot be content with an occasional sermon. We must make our entire ministry one of teaching, and that means we must begin by teaching ourselves. We must live day by day with the great themes. We must know what is being written about them by the great thinkers; we must test what we have read and thought by the life-problems of the men and women we touch, and we must pass on what we have so learned and tested to all whom we can reach. How this is to be done in detail I cannot say. It is a complex problem varying according to the different conditions, and each man must solve it for himself. But the ideal is one that should be common to us all, namely, to make an intelligent acquaintance with the great essentials of our Christian faith an integral part of the intellectual equipment of every Christian.

What a difference it would make in our preaching if we could take for granted such acquaintance on the part

of our congregations! With what assurance we should preach the great themes, the themes that we so often pass over now for fear that they will not interest the people! We should have no fear then of doctrinal preaching, for we should know that there is nothing in the world to which men will respond so quickly as doctrine, provided the doctrine preached has been warmed by the fire of experience; for doctrine is only another name for truth, and truth is what enlightens and guides and inspires.

And how is it with the third of the great functions of the church—inspiration? Must we not confess failure here? When we bring our ministry to its practical test in consecrated lives—lives, I mean, spent in devotion to the great common causes through which human brotherhood is realized—are we not more than ever convinced of the gap between our ideal and our accomplishment?

This failure is due not simply to the fact that as preachers we have not presented the claims of the gospel in sufficiently persuasive and compelling terms; it is due also, perhaps even more, to the fact that we have not been able to utilize effectively the energy we have released. There are people who cannot teach a Sunday-school class or talk in prayer-meeting, and yet who would like to do something for Jesus Christ. But many of our churches are so imperfectly organized that there is no way of making use of their services. There is an unexpended balance of power in the church, of which we are not making full use. What we need to do is to divert this power into the proper channels, to establish such points of contact between our

churches and the agencies which are engaged in moral and social reform that they can draw on us for the recruits they need, and to create such a sentiment in the church that service so rendered shall be recognized and honored as being as truly church service as preaching or praying.

But it is not only that we are not doing the things we ought to do: we are wasting our energy in things that are unimportant; we are expending in competition among Christians the power that we ought to be using in the attack upon the entrenched evils of society.

I spend my summers in a New England village whose united resources would be just sufficient to maintain one strong church, but we have three, each competing with its neighbors for the support of the community. In many other villages no larger you can find four or five, while not far away there are great reaches of untouched territory where the gospel is never preached. How can we expect people to believe that the church is in earnest when we waste our resources as we do?

That is why church unity is so important. It is important for practical reasons, because without it we cannot provide adequate openings for the energies of our strongest men and our most devoted women. We cannot grapple as efficiently as we might and as we ought with the great common evils which are all about us. But it is even more important in its bearing upon our ideals, for without it we cannot make the church what it was meant to be—the body of Christ, the organ for the expression of his Spirit in the world.

How is this ideal to be realized?

What can we do to make the church what in our heart of hearts we know it ought to be? There are two possible things we can do. We can meet and discuss the things on which we differ, and we can go out and work for things on which we agree. Both are useful, but the second promises quicker and more lasting results.

In recent years there have been held a number of conferences upon church unity, but thus far they have accomplished little because they have all run against the initial difficulty of which we spoke at the outset—the fundamental difference in the conception of the church itself.

Yet all the while the cause of unity has been making progress. Why? Because Christians have been forming the habit of working together. You cannot work with a man without understanding him better, and you cannot understand him better without liking him better, and when you understand a man and like him you are willing to live with him.

We have an example of what may be done on the foreign field. Here the pressure of a common need is bringing Christians together, and their practical co-operation is bringing forth new forms of organization adapted to express and to further this common purpose. The secretaries of the foreign missionary societies meet every year for conference, fields of labor are mapped out, and plans talked over. In China alone there are six union theological seminaries, while most recently the Edinburgh Conference gave splendid illustration of what we may call the ecumenical Christian consciousness.

The example set abroad is being followed at home. Here, too, the churches are coming together to study the common problems which face us all alike, and this growing consciousness of unity is finding official expression in such bodies as the Federations of Churches local and national, and the Home Missions Council.

But, after all, this is only the beginning. When we have covered the field and mobilized our forces the question will still remain: What are we to do with them? What good will it do to unify our organizations unless we can direct the forces we command into channels of useful and efficient service? What is the use of having a strong church unless it becomes in fact what we have seen it ought to be—the leader in the great moral and spiritual revival of which we have been speaking?

And so I come back to that with which I began—the ideal. The church will be what it ought to be when enough

people see what it ought to be and want what they see.

It is the preacher's business to make men see. Preaching is the impartation of truth by personal contact, however brought about. It is such a presentation of the ideal as shall commend itself to the heart and lay hold upon the will, such a presentation as shall make God so real a fact to the consciousness of man that his soul shall be lifted up in worship; but, at the same time, such a presentation as shall make God's loving purpose for all mankind so clear that worship shall inevitably bear fruit in service. Preaching, in a word, is such a presentation of the gospel as shall make Christian doctors, Christian lawyers, Christian teachers, Christian statesmen, Christian philanthropists, Christian workmen, Christian fathers and mothers, and so at last a completely Christianized society. This is the minister's work, and there is no greater.

THE MINISTER'S LIBRARY

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"In your study you will, of course, take advantage of the best that scholarship can offer you in the interpretation of the Word. Before preaching upon any passage you will make the most patient inquisition, and under the guidance of acknowledged masters you will seek to realize the precise conditions in which the words were born."—JOWETT, *The Preacher, His Life and Work* (1912), p. 122.

The minister's library is his chest of tools. How very essential tools are! Every worker, mental or manual, must have them. Tools must be up to date. They should represent the best that can be procured, and should embody every modern improvement. A man working with antiquated tools will be behind the times, and his work can hardly be in